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**Cultural Connotations of Conceptual Metaphor and
Its Application in English Culture Teaching**

概念隐喻的文化内涵及其在英语文化教学中的应用

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Abstract

Metaphor has been studied for over two thousand years. Nowadays, the theories of metaphor can be roughly divided into traditional rhetorical theories, including the Comparison Theory, the Substitution Theory and the Interactive Theory, and the contemporary cognitive theories, including Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Blending Theory (BT). The traditional view of metaphor, Aristotle as the representative, regards metaphor as a purely linguistic phenomenon and one of the rhetorical devices. While the contemporary cognitive view of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson as representatives, studies metaphor from the perspective of cognition and puts forward the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. They argue that metaphor is pervasive in our daily life, not only in language but also in our thought and action. Most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. Within their theoretical frame, metaphor basically is a way of human thinking and a process of cognition. Metaphor is rooted in human experiences which are the product of our interaction with the physical and cultural environments. So it is widely accepted that metaphor and culture are inseparable: metaphor constitutes culture and is an important component of culture; it passes on and inherits culture; and culture, in turn, influences the formation and development of metaphor. The close relationship between metaphor and culture results in the fact that metaphors in different languages inevitably contain specific cultural connotations. Different cultural factors such as geography, history, custom, religion, value and even the thinking mode of the people are all greatly embedded in metaphors. Therefore, as a reflection and carrier of culture, metaphor plays a significant role in culture teaching. The application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to culture teaching may not only change the status quo of culture teaching, but also promote learners' cultural competence as well as their metaphoric competence.

Based on the latter theory, this thesis analyses the cognitive nature of metaphor, explores the cultural connotations reflected by the English and Chinese metaphors, emphasizes the importance of metaphor in culture teaching, and puts forward some suggestions on teaching culture through metaphor.

Key words: conceptual metaphor theory; cultural connotation; culture teaching

摘 要

人类对隐喻的研究已经有两千多年的历史。目前的隐喻理论大致可分为传统的隐喻修辞理论和现代的隐喻认知理论。传统的隐喻修辞理论包括对比论, 替代论和互动理论; 现代的隐喻认知理论包括概念隐喻理论和整合理论。以亚里士多德为代表的传统隐喻修辞理论认为隐喻是一种纯粹的语言现象, 是一种修辞手段。而以 Lakoff 和 Johnson 为代表的现代隐喻认知观则从认知角度研究隐喻, 提出了著名的“概念隐喻理论”。该理论认为隐喻从根本上讲是认知现象, 是一种思维方式。隐喻在日常生活中无所不在, 不仅存在于语言中, 而且还存在于人的思维和行动中; 我们赖以生存的日常概念系统, 在本质上也是隐喻的。隐喻是以人类的经验为基础的, 而经验的产生又是我们同周围物质和文化世界互动的结果。因此隐喻和文化是密不可分的: 隐喻构成文化, 是文化的重要组成部分; 而隐喻又是在文化环境中形成和发展的, 文化对隐喻的形成和发展产生重要的影响。隐喻和文化的密切关系使得各民族语言的隐喻具有丰富的民族文化内涵, 各民族的文化因素如地理环境, 历史背景, 风俗习惯, 宗教信仰, 价值观念以及人们的思维方式等都深深地体现在隐喻里。因此作为文化的表现体和承载体, 隐喻对外语教学中的文化教学具有重要意义。将概念隐喻理论应用于文化教学不仅可以改进当前的文化教学方式, 提高文化教学水平, 而且还能够提高学生的文化能力以及他们的隐喻使用能力。

本文从现代隐喻认知观出发, 分析了隐喻的认知本质, 结合隐喻和文化的密切关系, 用对比的方法, 深入挖掘了英汉隐喻的文化内涵, 探讨了隐喻在外语教学中文化教学的作用和意义, 提出了一些通过隐喻进行文化教学的建议和方法。

关键词: 概念隐喻理论 文化内涵 文化教学

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Chapter One Introduction

Metaphor has been a long-standing object of study. As early back as Aristotle's time (384-322B.C.), metaphor study has attracted the attention of scholars interested in language, especially rhetoricians and literary critics. In his book *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* Aristotle defined metaphor as the application of the name of one thing to another and regarded metaphor as a device for rhetoric. In his point of view, metaphor is a purely linguistic phenomenon and its main function is to add charm and clarity of diction. His view on metaphor dominates the mainstream of metaphor study for more than two thousand years. Since 1930s, metaphor has become a subject of interest to an increasing group of philosophers, cognitive linguistics and neuroscientists. Richards I. A. is the representative. In his book *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, he points out that metaphor is not only a language phenomenon but an omnipresent principle of human language as well as a way of thinking of human beings (1936:72). Richards' view breaks through the limitation of traditional view on metaphor and turns the study of metaphor from the matter of language to thought. In 1980, the publication of *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson) starts a revolution of theory of metaphor and marks the cognitive turn in metaphor study. Their Conceptual Metaphor Theory points out that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not only in language but also in thought and action; it is one way we perceive and view the world. That is to say, "our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:3).

As human conceptual system has a close relationship with culture, it is undeniable that metaphor is deeply rooted in the culture of the community that speaks the language concerned. On the one hand, since human beings share common function of physiology and psychology, living environment, etc., there is universality in the use of metaphor in different languages. But on the other hand, metaphors are not merely the production of human beings with the common physical attributes but also the creation of human beings with social and cultural attributes such as the particular geography, tradition, custom, history and religion. All of these cultural factors have great influence on the formation and development of our conceptual metaphor. Therefore our

conceptual metaphor is inevitably culture-coherent and even the same conceptual metaphor in different languages bears quite different cultural connotations. Much of the hidden or deep culture of a language can be transmitted by metaphor. Due to these findings many scholars, both at home and abroad, have made great efforts to investigate into metaphors from the perspective of cultural model and seek to find out what role metaphor can play in facilitating foreign language teaching and learning. They find that metaphor and culture are closely integrated and the analysis of metaphor can help us understand the cultural connotations reflected by metaphors and then capture the deep way of thinking of a nation. Therefore, it is very important to study the role of Conceptual Metaphor Theory in English culture teaching. The application of it to English culture teaching can change the status quo of culture teaching. It can arouse students' learning interests and increase their analysis ability. In this way students can not only improve their cultural competence, but develop their metaphorical ability.

In recent years, with the increasing attention devoted to the study of the close relationship between language and culture, the significance of teaching foreign culture has been widely recognized. More and more scholars have come to realize that cultural competence, i.e., the knowledge of the histories, conventions, customs, beliefs and value systems of another society, is indisputably an integral part of foreign language learning. And more and more language teachers have also begun to make great efforts to incorporate the teaching of culture into foreign language classes. Even though they have attempted many ways to teach culture, such as explaining cultural background, offering culture courses, there are still many unsettled problems. Both teachers and students are not satisfied with the current culture teaching because culture teaching in class is limited to the transmission of information about the people of the target country, about their general attitudes and world views. Culture is imparted as a body of knowledge, not as a feature of language itself. Therefore how to teach culture in foreign language class still remains a thorny problem we language teachers have to face.

Based on the main viewpoint of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the cultural cognition essence of metaphor, this paper attempts to reveal the cultural connotations of conceptual metaphor by the comparison of English and Chinese metaphors and

discuss the relationship between conceptual metaphor and culture teaching. And then some suggestions are proposed about how to apply Conceptual Metaphor Theory to the culture teaching practice. As this research involves two languages (English and Chinese) from different cultural backgrounds, comparison and contrast are the main research methods in this thesis. Besides, abundant examples are given to exemplify and illustrate the main points put forward in this study. Also, analysis is necessary to go along with the examples provided in order to make them clear.

The thesis consists of five chapters.

Chapter one is the introduction of this thesis, in which the author briefly introduces the theoretical background of the research, the purpose of the research and the organization of this thesis.

Chapter two is a literature review of the development of metaphor studies at home and abroad, mainly the traditional theories and the contemporary cognitive theories. The traditional theories include the Comparison Theory, the Substitution Theory and the Interactive Theory. The main Cognitive theories of metaphor are Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Blending Theory (BT). In this chapter the definition, the working mechanism, the classification and the main features of the Conceptual Metaphor are expounded in detail.

Chapter three first presents many scholars', such as Kovecses, Naomi Quinn, Gibbs and Ning Yu, investigations into metaphors from the perspective of culture model. After introducing the definitions of culture given by different scholars, this chapter continues to expound the inseparable relationship between metaphor and culture: metaphor constitutes as well as passes on and inherits culture; and culture, in return, influences the formation and development of metaphor. And then the rich cultural connotations of Chinese and English metaphors are further analyzed through abundant examples in detail in this chapter, which paves the way for the following study.

Chapter Four deals with the application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to culture teaching in foreign language class. The importance of culture teaching and the feasibility of teaching culture through metaphor are first discussed. And then the existing problems in culture teaching as well as the proposed suggestions on how to apply Conceptual Metaphor Theory to culture teaching are presented.

Chapter Five is the conclusion part, which points out the findings and limitations of the thesis as well as the suggestions for further study.

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